

Jason Henderson
Colossians Transcriptions
140202

Faith and Love pt. 2

I'm still going to be in Colossians 1: 3-4, mainly just verse 4... I'm skipping verse 3 because it has to do with prayer, and he talks about prayer in verse 9, so I'm going to talk about it more there.

I'm purposely starting off slow with some of these basic concepts: grace, peace, faith and love. Last time we focused on faith. And we talked about it by discussing first the fact that there are two seeds with which the bible has to do. Two natures. Right in the beginning, in Genesis chapter 3, you see this when God is pronouncing the curse. He begins to talk about the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.

Now the seed of the woman is Christ. All throughout the Old Testament, all the way to the book of Revelation in chapter 12, the purpose of the woman, the bride, Israel, the church, however you want to put it, is to bring forth a very specific seed. She is the fertile ground in which a very specific seed has increase, growth, and manifestation.

Then there's the seed of the serpent, and we were talking about how there is this contrary nature that is not simply less than Christ, it is, in so many ways, *opposite* to the nature of Christ. It's contrary to it, enmity with it, and in the light, when your heart begins to see the Lord, that's one of the things you begin to see with real clarity. You start to see that the two have nothing in common; the two don't overlap at all. You see that the nature we were born with is in perfect darkness. We don't have any spiritual light whatsoever.

Jesus said if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness. This darkness that is in you is great... It's incredibly great. It's the complete absence of all spiritual truth, perspective and reality. And if we are not willing to reckon with that, if we actually give ourselves more credit than that as natural human beings, then we're never going to see the truth. If you think that your ideas about things like faith and love, apart from the Lord opening the eyes of your understanding to see that reality... If you think there's truth in our natural ideas and the things we just assume, then your heart is never going to see the truth.

I think that's why Paul says in so many places something like, "When Timothy came and told us of your faith and love, then we rejoiced..." Or in Colossians 1 he says, "We gave thanks to God, the

father of our Lord Jesus Christ, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints.”

There are a whole bunch of scriptures where those two words—faith and love, seem to serve almost like a tell-tale sign for Paul of spiritual life and growth. It’s a sign that the Lord is actually finding room in hearts to do something.

Why is that? Doesn’t everybody that believes in any religion say they have faith and love? Yes, they do... And yet the reality of faith and love that Paul was seeing in these believers is something that is one hundred percent impossible for the natural man. Man cannot produce, create, come up with, what the bible calls faith. It is simply not possible.

Christ is the author of true faith because true faith is seeing with Christ’s light, with His eyes. True faith is a spirit-given beholding of all things as they are in Christ. True faith is not anything man can do, or anything man can believe. It’s not beliefs at all. Human belief is something so far less than true faith. Belief is what your natural mind thinks about something when you can’t see it. That’s why we have beliefs. “I believe in something.” Why do you believe it? “Well in the absence of proof, I have an idea that I’m standing by.” That’s what beliefs are. They’re completely natural. They are simply conclusions or deductions based on what you see and hear with your natural eyes. They are very weak.

Not only that, but they change constantly. You change your beliefs all the time. Maybe you don’t change some of the fundamentals of your creed, but we say things like, “I used to believe that Jesus was like this or that...” Or, “I used to believe this verse meant that, now I believe it means this.”

Why does that happen? Because you are the author and finisher of belief. Because it comes from you and works in you as your own perspective and idea; as your own conclusion. And we like it that way. Man runs from faith. I know that that sounds weird, because everyone likes to talk about faith, but faith doesn’t leave any room for your beliefs.

When the eye of faith begins to open in your heart, you begin to recognize that your beliefs are the problem. Your beliefs are the reason you haven’t come to faith in so many ways. Your beliefs stand there as these big, carnal, imposing blockages or obstacles, barricades, eclipses that are in the way of the light. They’re right there standing there, blocking true light.

And that’s why I always tell folks that I’ll do my best to answer a question if I can and I’ll maybe point to a few scriptures if I’ve seen anything, but if something is just a belief to me then I don’t like to talk about it. I feel like I’m going to have to repent eventually for whatever I say when it doesn't come out from faith.

The reason I say all of that is because when Paul saw faith, he rejoiced. When Paul saw faith he said, “Oh my goodness, the Lord is at work in you.” 1 John says, “Faith over comes the world...” Is that the faith that we know? Our beliefs don’t overcome the world! My beliefs don’t even overcome my insecurities, or my bad day, much less overcome the world!

I can quote my beliefs out loud all day long and that doesn’t do anything. Nothing changes. But faith sees a whole new world. Faith turns on a completely different light. Faith wakes me up into a completely different realm and shows me a whole new reality. There’s no fear or insecurity where faith turns the light on.

Of course true faith overcomes the world. Of course faith is the victory over the world. And of course you begin to know what it means for faith to be substance and evidence in you of things that can’t be seen. You can walk by faith and see Him who is unseen.

Hebrews 11:27 says that you can see Him who is invisible by faith, because that’s what faith does. I know I’m kind of reviewing here... I want to talk about love, but this is why the New Testament speaks of faith as something so powerful and rich. Faith accesses the grace in which you stand. Faith works out in love. Nothing matters – not circumcision, not uncircumcision, but faith working through love.

The goal of our instruction, Paul says, is love, out from a pure conscience and sincere or unfeigned faith. I like that translation better... unfeigned faith... because faith is also a word that has a whole bunch of natural ideas and concepts and definitions attached to it. And that’s unfortunate. Jesus said, “My words are spirit and life,” and yet of everyone hearing those words, very few of them actually heard spirit and life. Very few had faith.

And so what do people do when they're hearing words or reading about words and they don't see the spirit and life of those words? They do the only thing you can do—the most natural thing in the world is to supply your own understanding. That’s what we do. And your understanding isn’t spirit OR life, but we have to do something with those words, UNLESS the Spirit and the Life is appearing, unless you’re seeing in the same light as that spirit and life.

One person asked me one time, “What gives you the right to redefine some of these basic Christian words?” And my answer was, “Well I hope I’m not doing that, but the truth is I’m the one that has wrongly defined them to begin with! The Lord is correcting the wrong definitions and understanding I’ve given to these words my whole life!

Prior to seeing in the light, I invented things. Some of the things I invented myself; some of them I jotted down in the margin of my bible when I heard a neat definition of spiritual word.

Once I heard someone say “grace is getting what you don’t deserve and mercy is not getting what you do deserve,” and I thought that was great, so I wrote it down in my bible. Now there might be truth in that statement, but it doesn’t even tell you what grace or mercy is. It only tells you don’t deserve it!

Faith is the light, the view of God, waking up the human soul into a day that sees all that God sees. In His light you see light, and in that light what’s real to Him becomes real to your soul.

And if you stay in that light, and abide in that light, then you live according to that light. Things make sense in the light, and then other things of the darkness stop making sense to you. People who are not walking in that day, who are not living in that day, the day of the Lord, the light of the Lord, for these people almost anything goes. You can do almost anything in the darkness. People do things in the dark that they wouldn’t do in the light!

The reason for this is because in the darkness you can’t really see what’s going on. There’s no true judgment in the darkness. There’s just imagination and it could be good or it could be bad.... Who knows? There’s no shame in the darkness. There’s no true perspective.

But in the light, everything is exposed. It’s the same way with spiritual light. You walk in that day and suddenly there are things that you would never do in that light, there are things you’d never live for in that light. There are things you’d never teach, there are understandings you’d never have of scripture in that light....That’s the way it is.

I said all of that to say that there is a reality of faith. There’s a reality of love that Paul could look at and recognize among believers and he could rejoice saying that he knows without a doubt that Christ has found room in these peoples souls to make Himself known. There is something so real about true faith and true love that it was kind of like a tell-tale sign for Paul.

Ok, What is love? Love is a hard thing to put into words. I’m just going to do the best that I can to describe some of the things that have become real in my heart.

I see love as both a kind of nature and a kind of relationship. And both of those can involve a feeling, an emotion that corresponds to it or lines up with it, but it cannot be defined by an emotion of a feeling. In other words, love isn’t principally a feeling. There are feelings involved with love, but love is really a nature. I think you could say it’s a nature and therefore that nature has a certain kind of relationship associated with it. It creates a certain kind of relationship with others – with the objects or recipients of love.

But let’s take a step back before we talk about God’s love; let’s talk about human love a little bit. It’s a lot easier to make progress talking about spiritual love when we’ve separated ourselves a

little bit from human love. They are very different realities, and unfortunately, man usually tries to understand and define God and His love based on human love.

I was thinking about human love yesterday and I think that human love in a lot of cases is used almost synonymously with desire. That might not always be true, but when you're dealing with the nature of the fallen man, and a person loving things, that person is generally desiring to take things to himself. **That's the direction of the nature of man. The direction of human love is towards self.**

The nature of man is always aimed towards himself. This is what we chose in the garden. This is the lie we believed in the garden, and it's become the permeating, ever-present lens through which we still see all things. It's this idea that man can be and do something apart from God. Man can have his own wisdom, his own knowledge of good and evil, his own life, his own independence... **The lie is that man has something, is something, knows something, can be something in and of himself.**

And so all of our love is really a desire to have something, to take something, to possess something.... And that's really how natural love works in most instances. You love something – like hot wings – so you put as many of them as you can into your mouth. If you love money, you put as many bills as you can into your pocket. You fall in love with someone, you want to take that person and live with them for the rest of your life.

This isn't always inappropriate, but I just want to try to expose the nature of that love. It's a big arrow that points towards self in a lot of different ways. So the desire that you feel in natural love is a desire that's based in self, it's self-seeking, it's really self-love. Self-love is really the primary love that man knows.

The reason I say "primary" and not "only" is because it seems to me that there are some instances where natural love maybe approaches a reflection or shadow of real love. There are cases where you seem to really want what is good for someone else, like with your own child. But sadly, even in these cases, there's a whole lot of self-love mixed in too.

You want your kids to be safe and you think "This is all about them... I want them to be safe." So we say, "Buckle up, kids!" And yet if you look a little bit deeper, or peel just a couple of layers back, YOUR life would be crushed if something happened to them. Your heart would be broken. How could you go on?

Or you say, "I want my spouse to be happy," so you give them whatever they want. And that looks and feels nice, and it looks selfless... but it's also because they're easier to get along with and so there's less friction in the house... etc.

Self-love is at the center of pretty much everything that happens in our heart.

So the problem with natural love or human love is that it's moved and motivated by a very particular nature, a nature that values things according to their benefit for self. That's really how we see and relate to the world. Something is good to the extent that it benefits me. Something is important to me to the extent that I gain from it in some way or another. Something is true to the extent that I really want to believe it.

Human beliefs are based on what you want to be true about society, politics, morals, family... whatever. And if you don't like certain things, you find a belief to go along with things you do like, you know? If you don't want to believe in God, you can choose to be an Atheist, but it's never because you actually humbled your heart and asked God in a true way, "Are you real?" It's because your desires are creating your beliefs. You can control your beliefs based on the things that you love. And that's the way self-love works.

Now, the natural man likes the *idea* of selfless love. We all stand back and ooooh and ahhh at a stories of selfless love. They make good movies. And frankly, dogs do it a lot better than people.

Have you seen that movie about a dog named Hachi? It's the saddest thing I've ever seen in my life! There was a professor who would go to the train station and take the train to work every day, and then take the train home. And Hachi, his dog, would go to the train station to wait for him. He knew exactly what time he would be there.

And they did this every day for a couple of years, then all of a sudden the professor died. And the dog went to the train station to meet the professor, but he never came. And Hachi waited there at the train station for ten years! He waited there eating scraps, waiting for that guy to get off the train, until he finally died. Now there's a statue of the dog there. It's a true story.

We like those kinds of stories. Stories about selfless love interest us, but we can't do it. We like to hear the stories and watch the movies... We like to have heroes that do things out of selfless love, but we can't actually do selfless love because we can't escape ourselves! Without the cross working in you as a true inward reality, you can't escape the man who only loves himself.

So our relationships, the ones that are built on this kind of human love, can sort of be compared to a bunch of ticks without a dog. Everyone is just kind of sucking life out of everybody else. Everyone is sucking back and forth, but it's always for their own personal good. And you love tick number 8 because they're important for your well-being. You can't imagine life without them! And everyone is just taking from each other. And relationships in the natural realm function when they are mutually beneficial. That's kind of how it is with us...

When our businesses, our families, or our natural relationships have some kind of mutual gain for self, then those things function well. But just as soon as someone stops getting what they're looking for —it doesn't matter if it's old cousin Bob whom you've known for years, or if it's the secretary who's worked at the office and she's been so nice or whatever—just as soon as you can't pull things out from them any longer, just as soon as the well runs dry with that person, well then look out! Those relationships are so fragile because they're based on humans pulling things out of each other. When basic self-love is not being met, then everything changes. Especially when fear enters our little world built on self-preservation! Then mothers turn on daughters, neighbors kill each other.

History has proven this to be true. People are living civilly and happily, and then something horrible happens, or the threat of something horrible happens, and people begin to act like animals. Self-preservation manifests itself as being the true motivation behind most of what we do.

I've told this story before, but when I was working at a homeless shelter in Kansas City, a grown mother and daughter came in and we only had one bed left. And they were all friendly and nice to each other and seemed like they were getting along, but when we told them there was only one bed available, they just started fighting about who would get a room and who would go out into the street. They were fighting with one another, right in front of the check-in booth, and I was just thinking to myself, "What is wrong with this picture?!"

Natural man does not know true love because man cannot stop the all-consuming obsession with self. Man has the wrong nature, the wrong relationship, and his feelings align with that nature. I mean the strong feeling of love corresponds to the kind of nature that's working in that person.

Now, true love also has strong feelings and desires associated with it, but it's according to a different nature, and the love flows in the exact opposite direction. True love has another nature to it, and therefore it produces a completely different kind of relationship. The direction of God's love is always out away from self. It flows in the opposite direction of man's love.

In true love there is an incredibly overwhelming desire as well, and yet the desire of real love is a longing, a burden to give, to share, to pour out, to spend and be spent for souls. Or even, as Paul says, about the Israelites according to the flesh, he has a willingness to be cut off from God if it means the benefit of his countrymen.

This is a love that man does not have the ability to produce. It is even possible, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, to give your body to be burned and have not love. You can do a lot of things with self-love being the true motivation. Giving your body to be burned and still not having love?? Giving everything you have to the poor without love?

People do all kinds of things that have the appearance of self-sacrifice that are actually for self-glory, for the name that they will make for themselves, for the remembrance that they'll have after they're gone. Self-love will go to great lengths. I don't think it will stop at anything, but... There is another kind of love that truly doesn't have any secret selfish motivations. There's no hidden motive. There's no seeking of one's own gain. It's just not part of that love.

There's a kind of love that truly wants to pour out and to be spent for the good of what life really is in another person. And the bible says that God IS love. But we do terrible things with this verse! Instead of knowing the nature of God and allowing that nature to define our understanding of love, we take our own understanding of love and let it define our understanding of God! And then we look around at the tragedies in the world that man has created and say, "But I thought that God was a loving God! Why did He let this happen?"

But in the light you can see that everything that God does is an expression of what He is; part of His actual constitution is love. Scripture doesn't say, "God loves," it says, "God is love." Part of His actual being and constitution is this constant arrow that points away from self, Himself. It's this desire to give, to share, to pour out, to spend and be spent, and to give Himself. He could only show bits and pieces of that love in types and shadows under the old covenant. But He summed up His love, everything that He could give, and wanted to give to the human soul, He summed it up in one perfect package... All of His love, all of His light, and life and truth... every single aspect of what He could possibly give to the human soul-- He put it all in one package and that package has a name and that name is Jesus Christ.

So the giving of Christ to your soul is the love of God. And that's what Christ is. He is the love of God made manifest. He is the love of God come into the world. He is the love of God given to you.

I have a bunch of verses here where the word love is attached to. Let me read a few of them here because it's good to see that when the New Testament talks about love, it talks about love in the context of God taking something that is Him, that is His, and offering, giving, making available, revealing that thing that's His to you. That's what love does. That's what love is.

John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands.*

Jesus is defining His relationship with the Father. It's a relationship of love. What's that love like? It's a full, complete giving of all things into the Son's hands.

John 5:20 *The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing.*

John 3:16 *For God 'in this way' loved the world...*

You've probably heard me say this a bunch of times, but that word "so" in Greek (for God so loved the world) is not a measure of quantity, it's a measure of kind. "For God in this way loved the world," I don't doubt that it is also quantitatively immense, but that's not what the verse is talking about. The verse is defining the *way* God loved the world; the nature of the love.

For God in this way loved the world... that He gave. He had something, it was His, and it was only His. But He shared it, He gave His Son, this perfect Son who is righteousness, light, truth, love, goodness, this everything. God loved the world in a specific way – by giving us all that He had in Christ.

Romans 5:8 *God demonstrated His love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Well that's a demonstration of love—the giving of Christ.

Galatians 2:20 *I've been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me. And the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf.*

Incidentally He's still doing that. He didn't just do that in history, He's doing that right now. He's giving Himself on your behalf. He is giving Christ constantly as the life, the relationship that the Father recognizes.

Ephesians 3:4 *But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even while we were dead in sin, made us alive together with Christ.*

That's the great love. He made us alive together with His Son.

Ephesians 3:19 *To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.*

The love of Christ is the filling with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 5:2 *Walk in love, as Christ has also loved us, and has given Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God. Again, love defined by the giving of Christ.*

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself on her behalf.*

In all these verses, love is attached to giving.

1 John 3:1 *Behold what manner the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.*

Here is the love of God... What manner? What's the nature of it? He made you a child of God.

1 John 4:9 *In this the love of God was revealed in us because He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.*

And there's a whole bunch more.

To tie this back into Colossians, when Paul was seeing love work in the Colossian believers and is rejoicing, it's not just that they are being friendly to each other. I believe Paul was seeing evidence that these people were being moved and motivated by a nature that is foreign to the human soul. It is the nature of God. And that this nature was working in them away from self, in a totally opposite direction. He's seeing that relationships are being established within that body, within that group, where the good of the others is becoming the good of the one. The good of the whole is what each member is seeking.

I may say more about this next time, but the love of God, the true love, cannot work in you in the presence of the wrong nature, the wrong seed. In other words, only by the inward working of the cross, which is the removal of the wrong seed, the victory over that worldly seed... only as the cross ends your souls relationship with the adamic man and his love, only then to you begin to know, experience and share the love of God.

What I'm trying to say is that the true experience of the cross is the prerequisite for love. Anything that comes from man that bears the name "love" that is not related to the inward working of the cross is fictitious. It might look really good, but you just don't have the resources to love until the cross starts cutting down the man who only knows self-love.

Long ago, God spoke this very thing to Israel, sayin:

Deu 30:6 *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*